1607/2439.

FAITH PROMOTED,

AND

FEARS PREVENTED,

FROM

A PROPER VIEW OF AFFLICTION AS GOD'S ROD.

IN A

LETTER from Mr. JAMES YOUNG, Writer in Edinburgh, to his Spouſe, during his abode in London. *Anno* 1697.

Truſt in the Lord, and do good, and verily thou ſhalt be fed. Pſal. xxxvii. 3.

Take no thought, ſaying, What ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things. Matth. vi. 31, 32.

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67
JAN

PREFACE.

A MAN *in proſperous circumſtances may declaim with eloquence on the duty of patience and reſignation under adverſity; but as his reaſoning on that ſubject is the reſult not of experience, but of ſpeculation, it cannot be expected that his arguments will be attended with great force of perſuaſion. The caſe is widely different, when a truly pious man, under the immediate preſſure of affliction, ſeems to "poſſeſs his ſoul "in patience;" and endeavours to vindicate from harſh conſtructions, the ſevere diſpenſations of providence towards him: ſuch a man cannot fail to command the attention of thoſe who are in like circumſtances.*

The author of the following letter was, when he wrote it, reduced to great hardſhips, after enjoying a conſiderable ſhare of the comforts of life: and to increaſe the ſeverity of his affliction, he had the charge of a numerous family, from which he was at this time removed to a conſiderable diſtance, in queſt of ſuch employment as might relieve him in his ſtraits. This was a ſituation which required the exerciſe of Chriſtian patience; and accordingly, it appears that this pious man was endued with an entire reſignation to the divine will: the unfeigned language of his heart ſeems to have been, "It is the "Lord Jehovah, let him do what ſeemeth good in his ſight."

To a perſon who is inclined to ſerious thought, the meditations of ſuch a man amidſt his afflictions, cannot but be acceptable; and they muſt be doubly ſo to thoſe who are themſelves ſmarting under ſimilar diſpenſations. For this reaſon the following letter is now made public; in which, if any where, conſidering the relation to whom it was written, we may conclude the author would diſcloſe his mind with that freedom of expreſſion and addreſs, which is natural to a perſon who is under no reſtraint.

Did the editor publiſh this letter with a view of gratifying the reader's taſte, by preſenting him with a ſpecimen of

elegant epiſtolary writing, his deſign would be loſt: the author's mind was too deeply affected, to allow him to pay a critical attention either to the manner of expreſſion, or the ſtructure and arrangement of his ſentences, eſpecially conſidering it was never intended for public view. But the reader will find many paſſages in this letter, which muſt appear uncommonly excellent, both on account of the truly Chriſtian ſpirit which they breathe, and the ſtriking original ſimilies and alluſions which they contain.

Mr. Young was ſon to Mr. Andrew Young, Writer to the Signet. On the 25th October 1687, *he married Eliſabeth Blackader, daughter of the Reverend Mr. John Blackader, Miniſter of the Goſpel at Traquair; by whom he had ſeveral children. The youngeſt was born December* 3d 1699, *two months after the death of Mr. Young. Mrs. Young ſurvived her huſband* 33 *years; and died* anno 1732, *aged* 72.

The Reverend Mr. John Blackader, her father, was a pious divine, ſuffered greatly for his adherence to the principles of the church of Scotland: he, with ſome others, were confined priſoners in the Baſs, where he languiſhed for ſix years till he died.

That thoſe into whoſe hands this letter ſhall come, may, through the divine bleſſing, benefit by the peruſal of it, is the earneſt deſire of

THE EDITOR.

Edin. 25th Jan. 1772.

A

LETTER, &c.

My deareſt, *London, Oct.* 26. 1697.

THIS ſame day ſeven years, if I remember right, was the firſt day of our united ſtate. And I remember, as if the miniſter had had ſome foreknowledge that we ſhould be in affliction, he tied me particularly to cheriſh you in your afflictions and troubles; which duty, that I may the better perform, I have written this letter: neither is that obligation then laid upon me, the only reaſon of my writing in this manner; but the law of love gently draws me to it. To be anſwerable to what you deſerve, might have allowed of much more, but could permit me to do no leſs. Yea, the very providences of the Lord, firſt in making me the head of ſuch a family, and then in inflicting ſuch troubles upon that family, ſeem to call for this duty at my hand. He is unworthy to be a ſkipper, that ſees a ſtorm coming, and does not the beſt he can to order all things in the ſhip fitting for it, encouraging the men, and directing them to ſtand by their tackling.

My dear, as ye know I uſe not to be very nice in words, ſo I deſire you will excuſe me at this time. I have another thing to think on than to flouriſh words. The ſoldier does not uſe all theſe ceremonies in the day of battle, that he does in a peaceful review.

To begin with an account of all the croſs and afflicting providences that I have met with ſince I left Scotland, were too melancholy a ſubject to entertain you with; only, in general, I am ſtill in the furnace. His anger ſeems, in theſe temporals, not to be turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill. It is long ſince the ſky was beſet round with black clouds, which threaten

a ſad deluge of miſery; and except he find ſome way of delivery, there can be no open door for me to get in at. Except that very hand that ſtrikes forbear, there is none can ſave me: you know Quarles has it thus;

'Tis vain to fly, 'tis neither here nor there
Can 'ſcape that hand, until that hand forbear.
Ah me, where is he not, that's ev'ry where?

I need not think to be better here than in Scotland, except he pleaſe. I labour, and when with much toil I have brought a thing a pretty good length, the Lord is pleaſed, with one blaſt of providence, to put it all back again. So that as the mariner, in a great ſtorm, continues at work; but being ſenſible of its inability to ſave his life, he is betwixt hands, ſo to ſpeak, at prayers: ſo I, beſide the duty of prayer, which is incumbent upon me likewiſe, think that betwixt hands, to be doing ſomething for the fitting you and myſelf for this ſad blaſt, is now become my duty.

My dear, I have muſtered up a great many thoughts, for your and my own comfort: but I am not inſenſible how little weight they will bear with either you or me, except the Lord be pleaſed to bleſs them. I know they will no more be able to bear any weight in your mind, if he bleſs them not, than a chain of ſteel-rings touched by the loadſtone (which ye know will make the links ſtick together), will be able to bear any ſtreſs. However, becauſe the Lord has bleſſed theſe thoughts to me, I dare not hide them from you, both for the manifeſtation of his goodneſs, which I reckon myſelf obliged in gratitude to declare, and in hopes that they may do you no harm. O that he who has the hearts of men in his hand, and can turn them whitherſoever he pleaſes, would make them comfortably uſeful to you in this dark day!

My love, manifold are the meditations and arguments to move us to be in a poſture of entire ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the will of God. And,

I.

The ſupremeneſs of the nature and eſſence of God gives him a juſt title to do with us what he pleaſes. He is

30 67 JAN

is the Lord, and there is none like him, and therefore he ſays, "I will fulfil all my pleaſure." I am convinced, that they who dare repine at his providences, have not a due apprehenſion of his ſovereignty. He is the potter, we are the clay; ſo he may make what veſſels of us he pleaſes.

He is the author of all our good, the juſt and true proprietor of all his benefits: and this his ſovereignty gives him a power to do with his own as he pleaſes, without doing any wrong: and as we ourſelves are his, ſo all things we have are his, and not ours. So when he calls for his own, we have no reaſon to complain; but rather to be thankful he lent them ſo long. When he lends us any earthly comforts, he does not quit his property, but lends them only during his own holy pleaſure. Yea, we often break the term of the Lord, and ſo no wonder he be provoked to call back his own.

II.

And as I would have you, my love, to take a look of his tremendous ſovereignty; ſo I would have you to caſt an eye upon our own littleneſs, or rather nothingneſs. Alas, what are we in his ſight! How many thouſands of ſuch caterpillars has he in his world! And ſuppoſe we were a thouſand times more glorious creatures than we are; yet what are we before him, in whoſe ſight the angels are not pure!

III.

But then conſider not only the littleneſs and inconſiderableneſs of our natures, but their ſinfulneſs. And I doubt not, but ye will own upon this account, that though he had made us a thouſand times more miſerable than we are, that he is holy in all his ways, and juſt in all his works. When we reflect upon his greatneſs, we may ſay, "It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him "good;" and when we reflect upon our own ſinfulneſs, we may ſay, "We have ſinned, and committed iniquity, "and done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by depart- "ing from thy precepts, &c. To us belongeth con- "fuſion of face, therefore hath the Lord watched upon "the evil, and brought it upon us."

IV.

IV.

Again, conſider the firm and immutable decree of God. What fools would we be to be diſcontented with theſe things, which are as firmly ordained as our very eſſence and being itſelf? Shall the decrees of Heaven be altered for our pleaſure? We may as well grudge and repine that we are ordinary men and women, and not kings and emperors, and queens and empreſſes, as grudge at our preſent lot; for it was as ſurely decreed for me, that theſe miſeries ſhould befall me, as it was, that I ſhould not be king of England.

V.

Another meditation is this: What folly and madneſs were it for me to repine? This were to add both to my ſin and miſery. No, no, my love, every body is obliged to make the beſt of a bad market they can. If I ſhould fret till I conſumed all the moiſture out of my body, what ſhould I help myſelf? Plain reaſon ſays, it is folly to grudge at the thing I cannot mend. If I cannot bring my lot to my mind, I muſt bring my mind to my lot.

VI.

But then, not only does this repining add to our miſery, upon the account it renders us more miſerable by fretting, but is a ready way to provoke the Lord to add to our miſery. Contentment, and a ſubmiſſive carriage, not only line the inſide of the yoke, and make it ſoft and eaſy to draw, but is a ready mean to engage the Lord to take it off altogether. Some well-bred dogs creep the more cloſe to the ground, and the nearer their maſter, when they are beat, which engages the generous maſter to leave off ſtriking. What avails our wreſtling in the net of affliction, but to faſten us the faſter? It hurts us ſorer to kick againſt the pricks. Are we able to pull at one end, when he draws at another? Did ever any body won any thing at God's hand by force? A ſucking child when he graſps at the ſtaff in my hand, is a thouſand times more able to pull it from me againſt my will, than I am to pull from my Maker what he is not willing to give.

My love, theſe are ſome of the bands of iron that tie me to this duty of contentment; but now I am going

to

to let you ſee ſome of the cords of ſilk, that gently, and yet forcibly bind me to this duty. And among the foremoſt of theſe is,

VII.

The love of God ſhed abroad in my ſoul. I know he loves me, which I prove by my loving of him. This I could not do till he gave me this love; and this giving of this love is love. Shall I grudge at the ſtrokes given by my Beloved's hand? No: I profeſs I love that hand ſo dearly, that I love it beating me, and the blows given me by it, in ſo much as they are given by it, for its ſake.

VIII.

But again, how comforting is it ſometimes to feel the very hand that gives the blow, that makes the poor creature to ſtagger and be like to tumble over, gripe, hold up, and recover us from falling? Juſt like the tender-hearted mother, when ſhe gives her young child (that can hardly go alone, it is ſo young) a tip, whereby it is like to fall, with the ſame hand ſhe gave the gentle ſtroke, gripes and keeps up the child from falling. Here is the love of God; if it had not been for this, how ſhould our ſouls ſo often eſcape the net of the fowler; when we, like David, are ready to conclude, ſurely one day or other we ſhall fall by the hand of Saul?

IX.

But to purſue this ſimile: Not only does he give his children an helping hand and upholding gripe, but continues to lead us on, as if we were weakened by the daſh we got: he will not truſt us to go alone, but takes us by the hand, and leads us ſafely and ſoftly through all hazards. O bleſſed hazards! O happy croſſes! O ſweet afflictions! O deſirable troubles, that procure ſuch company and ſuch conduct!

X.

Another encouragement and comfort under the rod is, that thereby he purifies us. What is the deſign of the goldſmith, when he puts his gold into the fire, but to purify it? It is not to burn it away nor conſume it. Why are we ſo oft ſteeped in aquafortis, is it not to eat away our ruſt? Affliction is like the oil that they anoint the wheels of the clock with, which makes it run without ſtopping.

ping. Wherefore think you is the Lord pleaſed to tear us in pieces with afflictions, but as the clockmaker takes the clock in pieces, that the fault may be ſeen and mended? Let us be content to have our duſt and dirt cleaned from our wheels, and to have a little more lead ſoldered on our balance that was too light, that we may keep time with the great never-erring dial of his word.

XI.

My dear, there comes in my mind a ſtory I have heard of a famous general, whom I knew, that to encourage his ſoldiers to keep on in a ſtraight courſe, without breaking their order or ranks, when there was any mire in the way, would heartily walk through it before them himſelf, with his ſtockings and ſhoes on his feet, and ſo march on without drying them. O has not the Captain of our ſalvation trode the ſame paths before us! Shall we be ſhy to paſs through theſe mires, wherein we ſee the print of the ſacred feet of our bleſſed Lord Jeſus before us? Are we better than he? Or ſhall we fail to follow his example, who endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame?

XII.

Excuſe my miſcellaneous way of writing. In clockwork, that which makes it all pleaſant and lively, is the motion whereby that part of the wheel which now is upmoſt, muſt immediately be downmoſt, and ſo in a continual revolution; as alſo that which makes the ornament and comelineſs of the great world, is the revolutions, turnings, roundings, ups and downs of it. This is the very nature of all things under the ſun; and why ſhould you or I grudge to keep our part, and be ſometimes down, as well as we have been ſometimes up? This circulation is that which makes the world pleaſant. If affairs ſtood always ſtill, we ſhould be in hazard of being like ſtanding clocks.

XIII.

But this turning not only adds to the ornament of the world, but alſo prevents corruption. The Chriſtian that is not poured from veſſel to veſſel, is ready to gather much dregs, or to turn like ſtagnating water, which gathers mud and corruption; whereas the purling quick-running ſtream keeps always clear.

XIV.

XIV.

Conſider, my deareſt, that others muſt have their ſhare, as well as we have had ours. Theſe worldly goods muſt circulate. The ſun muſt not ſtand ſtill for love of us, to give us a perpetual day; elſe what ſhould become of theſe living under other climates, or theſe parts of the world that are under darkneſs when we have light?

XV.

And this circulation of things may demonſtrate to us the inconſtancy and uncertainty of the things of this world. Muſt not that part of the wheel that now is upmoſt be turned immediately into the mire? As I remember to have read of a victorious king, who was ſo proud, as to have his chariot drawn by four conquered kings inſtead of horſes; and ſeeing one of them look ſtedfaſtly upon the wheel of the chariot he was drawing, the conqueror aſked him, why he looked ſo ſtedfaſtly upon the wheel? I look, quoth he, to ſee that ſame part that juſt now is upmoſt turn down immediately, which minds me of the inconſtancy and uncertainty of this world, and how juſt now I was a king, &c.

XVI.

But to turn to another thought. Perhaps, my dear, it may not be uncomfortable for us to take a look of our pilgrim ſtate. What cares the traveller that has a good houſe of his own at home, though he fare and lie hard a night or two by the way in his home-coming? Theſe worldly troubles are but like a bad bed, and too thin of clothes, or too ſhort for the traveller: will he not ſleep the more pleaſantly when he comes home to his own large eaſy bed? A little patience, and we ſhall come home.

XVII.

My deareſt, if it had been a time of perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake, would not you have thought yourſelf obliged to ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake? what if the Lord will have us ſuffer as much in a time of no perſecution, as if there were? The ſame arguments bind us chearfully to do it now as then, For,

XVIII.

It gives the like trial of the truth and preciouſneſs of our faith. This very one thing, if bleſſed of the Lord, might

might be of great comfort to us. How ſhould we know our grace to be real, if it were never tried? Unſpeakable is the comfort that ariſes unto the believer's ſoul, upon the proof and approbation of his graces. Suppoſe a beggar finds a ring, which he ſuppoſes may be gold, but does not certainly know till he carries it to a goldſmith, and deſires him to try it; the goldſmith tries, and paſſes verdict upon it, that it is good gold: then, and not till then, is the time that the poor creature's joy commences.

XIX.

Or to turn about to another thought. Will ye tell me, how we come to be ſo much troubled at ſo ſhort a trial? What is the length of our days; a hand-breadth, a ſpan, and it is gone? and of this hand-breadth, the half, by the courſe of nature, paſt already. Pray, where are our grandfathers, our fathers and mothers? is not their time paſt, and their acquaintances, whom you and I knew when we were children? Is it not juſt like a dream, to think on the days of old, or like a tale that hath been told? Are not they all gone away like a ſhadow, and left no remembrance behind them? Like a bird that flies through the air, and leaves no veſtige behind it; or like a ſhip that cuts out its way in the ſea, but immediately the water cloſes up behind it, and the place is not known through which it went? What, ſhould we vex ourſelves for a momentary trouble? I always valued things by their duration, and therefore muſt think the leſs of theſe miſeries upon the account of their brevity.

XX.

But ſuppoſe you ſhould be ready to think even a few years long; I give you this anſwer: Either our afflictions ſhall be very violent, and ſo not laſting, according to that axiom, That no violent thing is laſting: and ſuppoſe they could be laſting with us, we could not laſt long with them; a few days violent ſickneſs, or hunger, or pain, or extreme cold, or want, ſends us home. Or then they ſhall be more lingering, and ſo not ſo violent; and ſo by cuſtom turn more eaſy to be borne. The worſt that we fear, is eaſy to thoſe that never knew better. It is eaſy to a born beggar to want theſe comfortable ſupplies

plies that you and I have had; and why may it not turn eaſy to us too, if it pleaſe our Lord to take them from us?

XXI.

My love, I know your modeſty, and that ſhame is one of the ſad attendants of poverty. But when I begin to reflect more ſtrictly upon it, I conſider it is only a thought of my own mind, and in my own power to elicit ſuch a thought or no as I pleaſe. I likewiſe remember of an old ſaying, When there is no ſin, there is no ſhame. Now, ſince it is in my power to make myſelf free of ſo much of my miſery, I think I am a fool to myſelf if I don't do it.

XXII.

Or if theſe thoughts do not ſatisfy you, conſider how many are more afflicted, and in greater miſery than you or I ever have been, or perhaps ever will be in. I confeſs I cannot but be moved to ſee the miſery of many poor creatures in this city of London, ſome crying and weeping in the ſtreets, with a number of ſmall children; ſome walking upon crutches, as I have ſeen ſeverals, and both their feet ſwept away, I ſuppoſe with a cannon-bullet; ſome begging, and as if ſilence were the beſt oratory, ſaying never a word: well, think I, I have reaſon to thank God I am better than theſe people yet.

XXIII.

Or if ſuch ſad and melancholy arguments will not do with you, have the patience to hear a fable or two. It is a pretty fancy I have read ſome-where of the hares (who you know live but a miſerable life, being always in ſuch frights and hazards by the huntſmen), how they went all with one conſent to a ditch or pool of water to drown themſelves, as being weary of their lives; but when they came to the water, and ſaw ſo many frogs, whom they thought more miſerable than themſelves (for ye know every boy murders the frogs), they came their ways back again contented. So let us comfort ourſelves with our own lot. Suffer me to give then one more out of Æſop: The mole and the fox were in a diſcourſe, the fox complained mightily of the want of a tail, ſays the mole, Ye complain of toys, but I am blind.

XXIV.

I am afraid, my deareſt, that we look ſo much on the dark ſide of the croſs, that we ſeldom conſider its light ſide, and that we are ready to pore ſo much upon our miſery, as to forget to be thankful for our mercies. I would chiefly mention one in this paragraph, leaving the reſt till I come to them as I go along, and it it this: Has the ſpring-tide of our afflictions made any ebb-tide in our affections? I appeal to yourſelf, if I do not love you more (having had greater proof of your virtue) this day, than when I married you; and though I cannot ſay I deſerve it ſo well at your hand, as ye do at mine, yet I think I am not flattering myſelf, when I fancy your love to me to have ſtood like a rock, never moved with all the waves of adverſity. No, my love, though theſe troubles have now ſet our perſons at ſome diſtance, it is eaſily perceivable by both our letters, that our minds are at none. How oft when the world runs away from people, does the huſband fret and blame the wife for it; and on the contrary, the wife blame the huſband? and this is bitter as gall to them both. Is there any ſuch thing betwixt you and me? As it was no ſmall part of Job's trouble, that his wife gave him ſuch deviliſh advice; ſo I can aſſure you, that your comforting letters are very refreſhing to my ſoul. A good wife is beſt known in the day of her huſband's adverſity. My deareſt, is it not a happy thing, that under the croſs, as our ſouls are drawn nearer to God, ſo they are to one another? Are not our ſouls like lines drawn from the circumference to the centre; the nearer God our centre, the nearer one another? A little chamber-fire at the back of the ſame wall wherein is a great furnace, burns the better the hotter the furnace be, becauſe the heat of the furnace helps it. The more near we draw in love to God, it is but natural to us to love one another the better.

XXV.

How much have you and I both been taken with the lively deſcriptions of bravery and reſolution of mind in the imaginary heroes mentioned in romances; and how much have we really loved a fictitious knight-errant for his valour, which exiſted only in the fancy of the author?

thor? Now comes our own metal to be tried, ſhall we alter our opinion of bravery and reſolution, becauſe we are the perſons that muſt be the actors ourſelves? Seneca, in his book upon that queſtion, Why bad things fall out to good men, ſeeing there is a providence? hath a paſſage to this purpoſe: "Doſt thou wonder that the gods "who love the beſt of men moſt, ſhould appoint a for-"tune to thoſe whom they would have beſt and moſt "excellent, with which they may be exerciſed? But I "do not, upon the account the gods take pleaſure, "when they behold great men ſtriving with any calamity. "Sometimes it is a pleaſure to us to ſee a youth of a "briſk mind, boldly rencounter a wild beaſt ruſhing "out of its den, or if he fully endure the aſſaults of a "lion; and the ſight is the more acceptable to us, the "more honeſtly and bravely he does it, &c. I ſee not "what Jupiter hath more pleaſant in the earth, &c. "than to ſee Cato, &c." As if he had fancied that the gods took as much pleaſure in ſeeing good men ſuffer adverſity, as men in ſeeing heroes fight monſters with inimitable valour. Conſider, my deareſt, that he that imitates the good, muſt ſtand ſtiffly to it when his turn comes. The ſame author, though ye ſee he is but a Heathen, ſays, "There can no bad thing happen to a "good man; contraries are not mixed; and even as ſo "many rivers, ſo many ſhowers from above, and ſuch a "great ſtrength of ſprings from the main land, do neither "change nor in the leaſt alter the taſte of the ſea, ſo the "force of adverſity does not turn the mind of the brave."

XXVI.

I need not tell you, how great a mercy the ſanctified uſe of the rod is. You know that it hath many a time been a means to make folk reflect upon their ſinful courſes, as Joſeph's brethren, and Adonibezek, &c.; the puniſhment carrying ſo lively a picture of their crime, that all their obduracy in ſin cannot hinder them to diſcern it: Jer. ii. 19. "Thine own wickedneſs ſhall cor-"rect thee, and thy backſliding ſhall reprove thee: "know therefore and ſee, that it is an evil thing and "bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and "that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord of hoſts."

XXVII.

And as it has been a means of making people reflect upon their ſinful courſes, ſo has it been of bringing them unto Jeſus. The poor creature is like the dove in Noah's ark; if it could have found reſt for the ſoles of its feet, it would not have returned into the ark. I have many a time reflected upon myſelf, how when I was at eaſe I would begin to be comforted with this world, and take delight in the things of it, and begin to ſit down and reſt there, and in the mean time the reliſh of heavenly things become very faint to my appetite, and my deſire after duty go quite away, yea it would be uneaſy to me to go about duty, I would rather take any divertiſement than go to prayer; or if I went to prayer out of ſenſe of duty, would diſpatch it quickly and unconcernedly: when immediately comes a grievous croſs from an unexpected airth, and obliges me to ſee the vanity of the world, looſes my gripes of it, which I held as long as I could, and makes me have loving and warm thoughts of heaven, and not in ſuch a haſte to have my prayers ended, whereby grace is revived in my ſoul, *&c.*

XXVIII.

I have often wondered at Samſon, how he could fancy Delilah, after ſhe had ſo oft betrayed him to the Philiſtines. I think after I had found her out once, I ſhould never have loved nor truſted her more. But this world is a Delilah, many a time it hath betrayed me, and yet I am ſtill ready to retain a kindneſs for it. But believe me, the ſanctified diſappointments of it, I mean by the rod, is a good thing for weaning one's heart off it. I do confeſs, as in mechaniſm all upward motions are unnatural (and that is the reaſon engineers are ſo much puzzled to force water upwards), ſo in ſpirituals alſo, all upward motions are unnatural to the worldly mind; but the rod is God's engine whereby he drives our heavy earth-tending ſouls upwards.

XXIX.

Nor does the bleſſed rod only wean from this world, but even moves us to keep a ſtricter eye upon our walk in reſpect of the law of God. "Before I was afflicted "I went aſtray, but now I keep thy commandments."

A ſaint

A ſaint is like a child's top, as long as he is whipt he goes very well, but let him alone he begins to tumble. So that by theſe things we may eaſily perceive how true the ſcripture is, that all things work together for good to them that love God.

XXX.

There is yet another thought that ought to make us the more contented with the rod of the Lord; and it is this, that though he ſtrikes us himſelf, yet he will not without a quarrel ſuffer another perſon to touch us; as many parents are with their children. And when he hath uſed them as a rod for his people, he will then throw the rod into the fire. The parent is ſure his own love will not ſuffer him to hurt his child, which another that wants that love, he fears may do.

XXXI.

Again, conſider how abominable in the Lord's ſight an idol of jealouſy is. When we are too much in love with the world, there is leſs of our affections to ſpare for him; as it is impoſſible every one of the ſeven channels of the river Nilus ſhould empty as much water into the ſea, as is in the one channel before it is divided. My love, have ye not obſerved your affections to worldly things and heavenly, like buckets in a well, when the one is up, the other is down? I remember I have heard the heavenly and earthly joys compared to oil and water, that will never well mix together: ſo it is in this caſe. And therefore it is very neceſſary that we be ſometimes down in this world, that we may be up in heavenly things.

XXXII.

Another thing that comforts me mightily under theſe is, that they are but temporals; and it does not concern my covenant-intereſt. My deareſt, if I ſhould ſee a ſhip wherein you were, ſplit and ſink, and in the mean time you get out, would I not be apt to care the leſs that ſtrangers drowned? My covenant-intereſt is my jewel; and what though my houſe be ſet on fire, and my traſh burned, if I get out my jewel?

XXXIII.

It may perhaps not be amiſs to remember, how ſubmiſſion to the will of God is the very proof and teſt he

firſt tried man with, and continues to try him with through all ages. If Adam had been ſatisfied with the allowed fruits, which I am ſure were enough to anſwer all his neceſſities and more, he could not have coveted the forbidden fruit, nor been perſuaded to go over the bounds ſet him. What a wonderful inſtance of reſignation to the Lord's will was Abraham, in the famous inſtance of Iſaac, who when he could not ſee how the promiſe ſhould be fulfilled, if Iſaac were ſacrificed, faithfully relied upon God's veracity, though he could ſee no viſible way of the accompliſhment of that promiſe?

XXXIV.

But it will again, perhaps, not be uncomfortable to conſider what cordials the Lord allows his people to ſupport them, when they are ſorely ſtung by the ſerpentine afflictions of this world. Ye know the brazen ſerpent under the law in the wilderneſs, was to be looked to. See what we are to look unto; we are bid "conſider "him that endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt "himſelf, leſt we be wearied and faint in our minds," Heb. xii. 3.

XXXV.

Allow me to be miſcellaneous: Job ſays, that "man "is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards." Some gentlemen's ſons are cadets from their cradels; ſo is the Chriſtian obliged to fight from his birth to his death. Religion, ye know, is not only a ſpeculative thing but practical; it does not conſiſt in a few words, but in deeds, and obliges us both to do and ſuffer. And that Chriſtian that faints in the day of adverſity, I would have him conſider, how oft he has told God that nothing ſhould move him. Some (O that we may get grace not to be ſo ourſelves!) boaſt mightily how they will fight; but when the day of battle comes, they ſwoon away like women.

XXXVI.

If temporal afflictions were always tokens of God's anger, we might be allowed to be grieved at them: but the holy ſcripture, ye know, cautions expreſsly againſt this thought, when it ſays, love and hatred is known by none of theſe things: and ſo careful is the Lord that we ſhould not take them for any more than parental

love,

love, that he ſays, Heb. xii. 6. 7. "For whom the "Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon "whom he receiveth. If ye endure chaſtening, God "dealeth with you as with ſons: for what ſon is he "whom the father chaſteneth not?" &c.

XXXVII.

My deareſt, I deſire ye may not take it ill, that I have been ſo long of minding you of that which ye know very well; and it is, that God, our God and Father, is an eye-witneſs of all our trouble. Not a ſigh but he hears it; he puts up our tears in his bottle; all our perplexities, ſecret anxieties, and diſtreſs of mind, are known to him; our very night-fears are ſeen by him. Is it not comfort to the child, that the father knows his trouble?

XXXVIII.

Nor ſtands he as an unconcerned ſpectator, looking with an unpitying eye upon our grief: "In all their "afflictions, he was afflicted." Cheer up, have we the ſympathy of the Lord of heaven and earth? and does our troubles affect him? does he not by ſaying, "Saul, "Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?" reckon himſelf and his children all one; and will not this encourage us?

XXXIX.

Think not ill, when you pray ſeriouſly for the removal of a croſs, though he do not grant your prayer at firſt. I have heard it preached, that God takes pleaſure in hearing his children cry unto him, and that he ſometimes will not grant their prayer ſoon, that they may not leave off crying; as a loving mother, though ſhe intend to give her child what it aſks, has ſuch pleaſure in hearing it call and cry for it, that ſhe will not too ſoon give it.

XL.

But to give you, or rather put you in mind of another compariſon of the ſame nature: Oft-times we cry to God for things that he knows would hurt us; as children cry for knives, that would cut their fingers; or for charged piſtols, that might kill them; and therefore it argues no want of love in God to refuſe them. I always thought that was a fine word in Juvenal, which (though I cannot give it you with the ſame luſtre that it runs in the

the Latin) is to this purpoſe: "Let the gods weigh "what is fitteſt for us, for they will beſtow theſe things "that are fitteſt for us, inſtead of the pleaſanteſt "things: man is dearer, and more beloved by them, "than he is by himſelf. We being hurried on by the "impulſe of our own minds, and a blind deſire, aſk of "them a wife and children, but they themſelves know "what a wife and children they would be." His meaning is, the gods ſee it not good for us oft-times to have what we pray for; and God indeed ſees it ſo.

XLI.

Beſide, it may be our prayers cannot be ſaid to be unheard, though they be not granted in that very thing that we aſk. It may be he gives grace, which is much better than the thing we aſk. If a child ſee a counter in his father's hand, and cry for it, if his father do not give him the counter itſelf, but a piece of true gold, it is much better, and the child's requeſt cannot be ſaid to be denied, though he got not the individual counter he aſked. (Excuſe me for comparing the Chriſtian ſo oft to a child, for really in Chriſtianity we are childiſh, and behave like children.) And yet ſo childiſh are we, as to think our prayer many a time not granted, becauſe we have not the individual thing we aſked.

XLII.

There is another comfortable thought, which perhaps few think upon, in relation to the afflicted and unproſperous; and it is this: As God's love or hatred is not known by the want of ſucceſs and proſperity in the world; ſo alſo the goodneſs or badneſs of our actions are not to be judged by the goodneſs or badneſs of their events. Many a time a good man follows a good method, in a good deſign, for a good end, and all does not ſucceed; and ſometimes he may be ready to join with the world, and blame himſelf. One ſays, *Careat*, &c.: his meaning is, he wiſhes that man himſelf to want ſucceſs, that values deeds by their events. I have obſerved, when people give an account of a loſt battle, generally the conduct of the general that was the loſer is blamed; whereas I am apt to believe, the loſer of the day has oft-times had more conduct and courage than the winner.

winner. I confeſs we are always ready to blame the unfortunate; and this is one of the miſeries of the unfortunate, that they muſt ſuffer blame; whereas if they had thriven in the very ſame methods they followed, theſe methods and they both had been highly praiſed. So ready are men to value things by their upſhot and event, which I have told you is the wrong way. And I have likewiſe ſhown you, that this blame or ſhame of it needs not touch you, except you pleaſe yourſelf.

XLIII.

Affliction tells what metal we are made of. Hold down the head of a tallow candle, and it goes out immediately; but hold down the head of a torch of wax or pitch, and it burns the better, and flames the more briſkly. The Chriſtian is like the torch. It is a pretty device in *Eicon Baſilicon;* there is a palm-tree, with weights hanged upon it, with this motto, *Virtue grows under weight;* it being alleged, that that tree grows the better if there be a weight or weights hanged upon the boughs.

XLIV.

A philoſopher having a pleaſant child dead, they were afraid to tell him, for fear of troubling him; however, at laſt they told him his child was dead, and behold all he made of it was, "I know," ſays he, "I did "beget a mortal." So may we ſay, We knew that it was the very nature of theſe things to be uncertain; riches make themſelves wings, and fly away.

XLV.

Again, I would have you to remember, how neceſſary theſe afflictions are for us. My deareſt, they are the phyſic of the ſoul; and though they be bitter potions, no affliction for the preſent being joyous, but grievous, yet they contribute much to the health of the ſoul: and as a doctor gives not the ſame drugs to every patient; ſo, as our caſe requires, our afflictions are altered, and there is a new receipt to be made up for us.

XLVI.

But neither is their quality alone fixed by the gracious Phyſician of ſouls, but their quantity alſo; he knows that a ſuperpurgation brings death, and therefore takes particular

particular notice of the ſtrength of the patient. Indeed ſome natures are harder to work upon than others: as alſo ſometimes he ſees fit to put in ſome things that gripe not only the belly, but the very heart; but then his patients want not precious cordials. A ſight of the Phyſician's face is of itſelf a great cordial; but much more when he ſtays them with flagons, and comforts them with apples (an anti-melancholic fruit), Song ii. 5, 6. O how whole does the poor ſick ſoul find itſelf, when he comes to the bed-ſide, and puts his left hand under its head, while his right hand doth embrace it!

XLVII.

Our bleſſed Lord ſays, "Let your light ſo ſhine be-"fore men, that they may ſee your good works, and "glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matth. v. 16. My love, does not worldly proſperity dim the light of the candle of the Chriſtian? does he not oft-times ſtand in need of the ſnuffers of affliction? Be not afraid, our Lord can ſnuff us very near, and not ſnuff us out; there is no fear his bleſſed hand tremble, and ſo come too near.

XLVIII.

Wherefore has the doctrine of the croſs been ſo oft preached unto us? Wherefore has our bleſſed Lord borne it before us? was all this pains to fit us for the croſs, and we never to meet with it? Have we been ſo long at ſchool learning navigation and trigonometry, and to keep a ſhip's reckoning, and yet never go to ſea? I believe we would be content to take the eaſieſt way of travelling to heaven; but God does not allow many of his children to travel to heaven in coach and ſix all the way. There is a great difference betwixt a pilgrim's going to the holy land, with much wearineſs and expence, hunger, cold, and wet, and a ſtudent of geography's travelling by his map; he ſits warm and dry in his good clean chamber, and looks over a few ſheets of painted paper, only making two or three ſteps with his compaſſes to apply the diſtances of places to the ſcale of miles; whereas the other goes many a weary ſtep with his feet: the former is the way we would fain be at in travelling to heaven.

XLIX.

XLIX.

My dear, what a happy ſtate were we in, if there were an identity or unity of our wills with the will of God? He that ſwims with the ſtream is not troubled with its current. Alas! how oft do we vex ourſelves, becauſe we cannot make our way againſt the tide of providences? Is it not our duty to have no will but what is his? Shall we pray, "Thy will be done in earth as "it is in heaven;" and in the mean time grudge when our prayers are granted? What ſays our Saviour? "Nevertheleſs, not my will, but thine be done." O my Lord, how happy were I, if my will were abſorbed into thy will, that I might feel no nilling nor willing but what is in thee! then ſhould I be in a ſtate of perfect tranquillity; then my mind ſhould be as free of ſtorms as they ſay the region above the moon is. Then ſhould I find it nothing to deny myſelf, being perfectly cleanſed from that baſe droſs of ſelfiſhneſs. My aſſurance that my God is the ſupreme and uncontrolled diſpoſer of events, ſhould eaſily perſuade me that all the accidents that can befall me, are but exact completions of his divine will, and therefore of mine own, ſo far as it is compriſed in his: and therefore his diſpenſations towards me would be in effect but the acts of mine own will, with the ſuperlative advantage of being directly his, who is wiſdom, power, and love.

L.

My love, I know ye know better things, than to think that God meant by allowing us any comfortable uſe of the creature, that we ſhould ſit down and reſt there; no, no; theſe things were but given us as ſo many ladders to climb up to heaven by. The deſign of theſe beautiful things, was but like the cryſtal of a watch, not to detain our ſight in its ſhining tranſparent body; but the ſight is to paſs beyond it to the dial-plate. One Mr. Pratt ſays well, "All the oriental luſtres of the richeſt "gems, all the enchanting beauties of exterior ſhapes, "the exquiſiteneſs of figures, the livelineſs of colours, "the harmony of ſounds, the light and clarity of the "enlivening ſun, the raviſhing form and order of all, "proceed from God." All the heroic virtues of the braveſt

braveſt minds, with the purity and quickneſs of the higheſt intellects, are all but emanations from the ſupreme Deity, whereby he deſigned not to enſlave and detain our paſſions, but to refine and exalt our conceptions, to perſuade us there is certainly in God much more than we can either ſee or comprehend. Now when God ſees us ſtay by the way, and like children when ſent on an errand, if they ſee any gliſtering gandy toy, forget their errand, and fall a gazing and running after it, it is no wonder he ſhould take this bewitching toy out of our way, and it may be give us a buffet to the boot. Alas! my love, can we deny but that we have both been too much taken up with doting upon the creature? let us now at length turn wiſe. What is the meaning of the rod, but that we ſhould hear him that hath appointed it? It is obſervable of the woman in the Goſpel, with the bloody iſſue, that ſhe firſt ſpent all ſhe had among the phyſicians before ſhe came to Chriſt.

LI.

It is true, that the Lord is pleaſed to keep us in the dark; we cannot ſometimes perceive his juſtice, nor read his love written upon theſe ſad afflictions we lie under, in ſo clear characters; his ways are in the deep waters, we cannot trace him out. But, my love, we look for the time, the happy time to come ſhortly, when we ſhall perceive the meaning of theſe things, and diſcern the harmonious concordance and agreement that is betwixt them all, to hold forth the glory of God. Our life is ſo ſhort a thing, that we can no more tell now, how theſe things are for the glory of God, than one that ſtays but half a minute in a muſic-room, can tell how harmonious the tune was: all we ſee is but as it were one link of the chain of providence by itſelf. But we look for the time when we ſhall ſee theſe things clearly, and diſcern the pleaſant thread of divine wiſdom that runs through them all.

LII.

It is true, theſe temporal afflictions may render us leſs regarded or reſpected in the eyes of the world; but they do not make us leſs favourites of heaven. It may

be

be we will not get ſo eaſy acceſs to ſome great men as we did; but does this keep us back from acceſs to our Lord? does this cloſe the door of prayer? does ever the Lord ſay, I will not have poor afflicted things to come to me? No, no; the quite reverſe; they neither hinder us from coming to God, nor God from coming to us; inſtead of being a hindrance, they are a reaſon for our coming to him, and pouring out our ſouls in ſecret. I appeal to yourſelf, if ever worldly afflictions made you reſtrain prayer before God, or clogged your ſpeech, or clipped the wings of your ſoul, that it could not take as far and as high a flight in this duty, as when the world run according to your own mind. Here are the ſweet hours that make amends for the earthly miſeries of the ſaints. And we cannot be ſaid to be altogether deſtitute, while we have our private retreats to him, and liberty to pour out our ſouls unto him. It argues no defect in thoſe heavenly joys, but in our appetites, that we are apt to reliſh them leaſt with ſour ſauce.

LIII.

When men have been long at ſea, there is great joy upon the firſt diſcovery of the land, eſpecially if it be their home. My love, let me cry to you to look out and ſee land, land, O Immanuel's land! let not theſe ſtaggering ſtorms ſo ſtupify us, let not theſe bluſtering winds ſo weaken our eyes, that we cannot take a look of Immanuel's land. Some ſay, when one fords a broad river, the ſafeſt way is not to look to the ſtream, for that turns the head giddy, and makes one ready to fall in; but the beſt way is to look over to the bank. O look not too much, my love, upon theſe turbulent ſtreams, but over all to that happy harbour of God's ſaints, and refreſh yourſelf with the ſolacing meditations of theſe uninterrupted entertainments and pleaſures, which all the inhabitants of that land do enjoy.

LIV.

Let your ſoul mount with the wings of contemplation, and what you find wanting in the creature, you may diſcern in the Creator. My dear, if the Lord were pleaſed to put aſide the vail, and diſplay ſome of the rays of his all-conquering beauty to our ſouls, we might look

with as deſpicable an eye upon all the world's glittering things, as the eagle that hath been ſoaring aloft ſtaring on the ſun, looks down upon the light of a glow-worm or a candle. Alas! what is to be ſeen or found in the creature, that is not more eminently in him? One ſays, "Theſe ſhadows of good that are ſcattered over terrene "things, as drops of dew, rarely (he means ſparſely), "are eminently in him as in an infinite ocean." I remember likewiſe an apocryphal text (which may have its own weight), Wiſd. of Sol. xiii. 3. ſpeaking of the beauty of the creatures, ſuch as the ſun, moon, and ſtars, "With whoſe beauty, if they being delighted, *&c.* "let them know how much better the Lord of them is, "for he the firſt Author of beauty hath created them." Verſe 4. "But if they were aſtoniſhed at their power "and virtue, let them underſtand by them how much "mightier is he that made them." Verſe 5. "For by "the greatneſs and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is ſeen." Scholars ſay, that all deſirable goodneſs is in God three ways. *Firſt*, By way of eminency or excellency, that is to ſay, there is no goodneſs in the creature, but what is more eminently and in a higher degree in God. *2dly*, By way of defluency, or ſuch a way as water-ſtreams are in the ſpring or fountain, out of which they flow. Or elſe, *3dly*, Formally. God is the centre of all goodneſs, and all the goodneſs of the creatures are united and concentred in him; as all the lines drawn from the circumference to the centre are united in that centre. Are we not fools then to delight ourſelves ſo much in theſe puddled ſtreams, when we have the clear fountain to go to? are we not fools to take ſo much comfort in theſe ſecond-hand pleaſures, when we can have them at the firſt hand? O happy are they whom God gives the grace to take the advantage of the ebbing of theſe unſtable waters of earthly pleaſures, to get a piece nearer to Immanuel's land! I apprehend, that to many a poor ſoul an ebb-tide of this world has been a ſtream-tide of heaven.

LV.

Again, remember, my love, that it is not only a bare removal of theſe miſeries we are now in, that we are to expect;

expect; we are not only to look for a deliverance from the ſcratchings of theſe briers and thorns of this wilderneſs, but a pleaſure, that no wonder though I were loath to venture to ſpeak of; becauſe I know, it not having entered into the heart of man, I cannot do it juſtice: but being emboldened by the hopes I have, that your own experience may in ſome part help my want of utterance, I am free to tell you, that if your own or my eyes were opened, to ſee one ray of that glorious Majeſty's beauty, as theſe glorious ſaints do, that for ever ſatiate their never fully ſatisfied eyes with it; the queen of Sheba's fainting-fit, which ſhe took at the ſight of king Solomon's wiſdom, 1 Kings x. 4, 5, 6. might appear but a faint reſemblance of that ſwooning even to death itſelf, that our ſouls ſhould ſuffer at the ſight of ſuch ſurpriſingly raviſhing perfections. No wonder that our impriſoned ſouls ſhould break all the bolts and chains that faſten them to our bodies, to go after ſo glorious a ſight. No wonder that our dazzled eyes ſhould never more be able to ſee light; for who can ſee him and live? If I remember the famous Mr. Boyle's expreſſion right, it is to this purpoſe: "The eager ſoul having diſcovered ſuch game "as this, hauls ſo fiercely, as it breaks theſe latchets "that tie it to the body." Then might our full-fraughted joyful ſouls not only ſay as Joſhua, chap. xxiii. 14. "Not one thing hath failed of all the good "things which the Lord our God hath ſpoken concern-"ing us; all hath came to paſs unto us, and not one "thing hath failed thereof:" but cry out as the ſame queen of Sheba did, the half was not told me. Nor could I have conceived the hundredth part of the half, though it had been told me. For as all theſe glorious characters that the Holy Ghoſt gives in the ſcripture of this heavenly bliſs, are no more underſtood by the carnal part of the world, than an excellent Latin epitaph, cut upon a marble tomb-ſtone, is underſtood by one that cannot read, who believes indeed, that it is ſome fine words or verſes; but can never have that reliſh of them, that a good Latin poet hath: even ſo, I ſuppoſe the ſaints themſelves, while in this ſtate of infancy, can have but a very faint apprehenſion of theſe unſpeakable plea-

ſures, in reſpect of what they ſhall have. Even the ſaints themſelves, while in this ſight-darkening clay-tabernacle, can no more have a true idea of theſe heavenly raviſhing anthems and hallelujahs ſung by the bleſſed choir of heaven, nor what it is that ſweetens and accents their notes, than one that never learned the gammut or ſcale of muſic, can have the idea of a fine air by ſeeing it ſet in a muſic-book. My love, our ſouls are now ſo much clogged with clay, that as we cannot have a conception any thing near ſuitableneſs of theſe heavenly things, ſo we weary immediately of them. Our ſouls are like birds tied to a ſtone by a ſtring, if we attempt to fly upwards, the heavy ſtone keeps us back, and ſo we are immediately at the ground again: but O conſider, when the ſtring ſhall be cut, eſpecially conſidering, that that very moment our eyes ſhall alſo be opened, with what a clever and ſprightly flight our ſouls ſhall flee away; how ſwift and high they ſhall mount to him who is the centre of their felicity! The needles and ſmall bits of iron that ye have ſo oft ſeen jump to their beloved loadſtone, when once within the ſphere of its activity, are but faint reſemblances of that eagerneſs of flight theſe bleſſed ſouls ſhall make to their attracting centre. With what deſpiſing eyes ſhall they look down upon this world! How ſhall they wonder at their bewitchedneſs, that ever they eſteemed it ſo much, and theſe things ſo little! Or rather perhaps (for I am pretending to ſpeak of a thing which I have but a glimmering knowledge of), how ſhall they be abſorbed in one entire eternal thought of admiration of him, that is eternally admirable and adorable! But what am I ſaying? alas! what ideas can the unborn child have of light? How ſhall we be aſtoniſhed, when we enter into that world of light! what a glorious ſurpriſal think ye it will be to our unbodied ſouls, to ſee ſuch coruſcant glory! but when I think of the Lamb that is their light, I cannot ſay what I think, nor think what I would. It is here that I think ſilence the beſt of oratory. O what faint reſemblances ſhall all our beſt communion thoughts be to one minute's enjoyment of him there! Here our ſpiritual performances, thoughts, and ideas of heavenly enjoyments, are but heavily done, our performances

ances and acts of adoration are gone about as if we were cumbered with cold, we do them as uncleverly as a priſoner in ſhackles and fetters would run a race; we are like children, on juſt now, and off immediately; the leaſt divertiſement to the eyes, or tinkling in the ears, puts us quite off what we were upon. But when we are diveſted of this body of clay, our heavineſs ſhall be turned into activity; we ſhall be clear ſighted in our apprehenſions of his perfections, and conſequently lively in acts of adoration: our coldneſs that cumbered us, ſhall be thawed and melted by the warming, as well as ſhining rays of his beauty. His infinite perfections being the object of our adoration, cannot but make us a great deal more perfect in our performances: our jail-freed ſouls ſhall no more be clogged by theſe fetters of fleſh; and our childiſh inconſtancy, and eaſily diverted thoughts, ſhall be fixed upon him, out of whom we can ſee nothing deſirable. The purified and illuminated ſoul takes ſuch an eager look of the admirable and infinite perfections of him, whom theſe angels, cherubims, and ſeraphims, are always adoring, and deſcries ſuch rapturing charms in his beauty, wiſdom, holineſs, and goodneſs, as kindles and heats it into an eternal flame of love, which can never cool nor be extinguiſhed, ſo long as thoſe infinite perfections continue to be its fewel, and that is for evermore. Suppoſe all the wiſdom and ſagacity of Solomon, and all the ancient and later wits; all the beauty and charming features of all the moſt exquiſite pieces of his handiwork, that have been famous in all ages for their charms; all the ſtrength of Samſon and David's worthies, of all the champions of the earth, and all the courage and bravery of all the heroes in all hiſtories, and all the glory, ſplendour, and majeſty of all the kings, Ceſars, emperors, and potentates of all the world; and then if you pleaſe, admit all the romances that ever were written, in their hyperbolical deſcriptions of all the admirable beauty of their imaginary ladies, and the wonderful valour of their undaunted knights, to be true, and add this to your former heap, and ten thouſand times more; and ſuppoſe, I ſay, all theſe perfections to be concentred and compriſed in one perſon, how were it poſſible for

any rational man but to love him! But, alas! what a feeble love were this to the ardent flames that have been kindled by the ſoul-enamouring ſight of him, whoſe perfections are not ſo much repreſented by all I have ſaid, as the meridian ſun is by a ſmall candle-light! Yea, I know not but that what they call the pain of loſs of the damned, may ariſe from a clear diſcovery of theſe perfections of God: and ſo this may create inexpreſſible deſires to be united to theſe perfections (for the very nature of perfection is ſuch, that whatever rational creature apprehends it, it cannot but deſire an union with it), which in the mean time the damned ſoul ſees, and knows cannot be; and this creates a horrible torment of the ſoul. I wonder not that profane godleſs people, who care not for God, while they are in this world, think this pain of loſs no great puniſhment; but if once God had unmaſked his beauty, if I may ſpeak ſo, theſe wretches cannot but be horribly tormented with an unutterable deſire of heart to be united to him. Hunger is putting no poſitive torment or pain upon a man, but he ſuffers great trouble by your doing nothing to him, I mean by not anſwering the cravings of his hungry heart. A man that is deeply enamoured of a piece of clay that ſlights his addreſſes, may be in perfect health, and yet his heart feel an unſufferable torment by her ſlighting him. And if one bit of clay deſired and not granted by one to another, can be ſo troubleſome to bear, let us not have ſlight thoughts of that pain of loſs, which theſe that are ſecluded from the preſence of the Lord ſuſtain and endure. The ſoul of man cannot have the idea of a very excellent thing, but he muſt alſo have a deſire to be united unto it. But the eyes of the ſaints will be enlightened in ſuch manner, as that they ſhall diſcover as much as they are capable to conceive, even with their enlarged faculties, of the infinity of the perfections and attributes of God, and particularly, his power in making, and wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice, goodneſs, and truth, in ſaving the world. What do ye think a clear diſcovery of the glorious work of redemption, which the angels pry into, will make? What joyful hearts will we have, when we ſee Chriſt coming in the clouds? What joy, when

believers

believers ſhall find themſelves on the right-hand party? will there be then any tears unwiped away from their eyes? will any there ſay, I am ſick? My love, the perfections of our Lord are infinite! Now, philoſophers deſcribe infinity, to be that whereof ſomething is always without or remains; ſo that when we have conceived all the perfections and lovelineſs we can, there always remains behind or without, unthought-of perfections in him that is infinite: ſo that it is abſurd to think, that theſe bleſſed ſouls can nauſeate or weary of their raviſhing delightful ecſtacies and raptures, throughout all the ages of endleſs eternity; for as theſe bleſſed ſouls do actually diſcover a vaſt deal of his unſpeakable perfections, they likewiſe cannot but know, that there is a great deal more out of their ſight. As when I ſtand at the ſea-ſide, and look upon the ocean, I ſee a vaſt deal of water: but my judgment tells me, there is a great deal more, which I do not ſee, becauſe it is beyond the horizon; ſo both what I ſee, and what I do not ſee, contribute to make up the idea and notion of the greatneſs of that ocean. You will excuſe the ſimile, though it halts in this, that the unſeen part of the ocean is eaſily conceived, becauſe it is finite; and therefore it muſt heighten our admiration of that part of his goodneſs which lies beyond our ſight, becauſe it is infinite. My love, think ten thouſand times more to be infinitely ſhort of the degree of this happineſs, and then add eternity to its duration, and it may be it will make you think ſomething leſs of theſe momentary troubles. Suppoſe all this world were one great book, printed in as ſmall characters as a pocket Bible, and one ſhort word in the beginning were dim and faint in the colour, but all the reſt of this vaſt volume, the cleareſt, blackeſt, and correcteſt characters that can be imagined, how inconſiderable a thing were this one word, in reſpect of all the reſt of the book? Alas! how inconſiderable are our few troubleſome days, in reſpect of all the reſt of eternity, whereof this is but one inconſiderable compariſon?

LVI.

My love, I have been the longer upon this laſt thought, becauſe when the choking thick air of this low valley of

of miſery, makes our hearts like to faint, we might perhaps find it refreſhing to our ſouls, to walk up the hill, and take a little breathing in the pure refreſhing air of Immanuel's land. We may take a look of this land of promiſe, not as the Iſraelites, who were not to enter, but as Caleb and Joſhua; and that is the reaſon I have ſtaid ſo long; the time is coming when we would be loath to come down the hill again. But I muſt turn to another conſolatory thought, and that is, Think and act faith upon the promiſes. If I were writing to an ignorant perſon, I could quote ſome of them; but I know ye are acquainted with all the buſhes where theſe ſweet berries of conſolation grow, ye know where the beſt cluſters of the ripeſt of them are; and I heartily thank you, that ye have been ſo kind as to gather ſome of theſe and give me; yea, I muſt aknowledge, ye have ſometimes forced them upon me, and put them as it were into my mouth; for which the Lord bleſs you, the Lord remember you for good concerning this, and wipe not out your good deeds that ye have done, &c.

LVII.

And as the promiſes are refreſhful to you, perhaps bygone providences of either through-bearing, or deliverance and outgate, may afford ſome comfort to you. Cannot, and may not, yea, ought we not to remember the outlettings of his through-bearing grace to our ſouls? O my love, how ſweet are the thoughts of this to my ſoul! how ſweetly did he carry me through that loſs I had by the French? was it I, was it not his grace? But why ſhould I begin with a ſingle inſtance? this is ſo large a field of comfort, that I think I muſt not enter into it; but recommend you, yea in love I charge you, not to be forgetful, but take ſome time to recollect and think upon his through-bearing grace, and the inſtances of it. And then have we not experienced his delivering mercies alſo? Cannot our ſouls ſay, I looked round about me on all hands, and there was none to ſave me; the Lord he delivered me? &c. Such inſtances of his delivering mercies as, * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * when there was no way to eſcape it, except the Lord had done it that ſame morning, eſpecially being in anſwer

ſwer to prayer, ought not to be forgot; nor the Lord's bringing about * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * when I could do nothing in it neither. But why do I inſtance one or two, let your own boſom adviſe you about the ſeveral inſtances of his goodneſs.

LVIII.

And it is even ſome comfort alſo, to find my heart ſo deeply concerned with others in affliction. I hope this is the effect of the rod. They are fools that reckon grace too dear bought. It may be, I was not enough concerned with the poor, when I was rich; and therefore I muſt be poor myſelf, to feel what they feel. Well, if it have this effect, this is ſome comfort.

LIX.

O but likewiſe it be comfortable to think, that our bleſſed Lord does not ſend us a warfare upon our own charges! A ſweet Maſter we ſerve, he never ſends us an errand, but he gives us money, leſt we ſhould want by the way; and ſtrength, leſt we ſhould be weary and faint by the way. It is pleaſant to live upon another's purſe: and the more we aſk the welcomer. If we muſt ſwim in the waters of affliction, it is himſelf that bears up our head; and it is eaſy to ſwim, when the head is borne up. O it is raviſhing to hear him, when we begin to cry, The water is too deep, I pray thee, Lord, let not thy gripe go of me, or I will drown, anſwering, "Fear "not, for I will never leave nor forſake thee!" What need us fear then, my love, can we not do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth us? and I am ſure ye think we may truſt him.

LX.

It may be, that this is one of the very ends and meanings of his providences, that we ſhould learn to truſt in him. What if the Lord's deſign be, that we ſhould know what experimentally it is to live a life of faith? Perhaps we have liked too well to truſt God's providence with a good bag of money in our cheſt; or, to give another touch at the former compariſon, we would truſt God to carry up our head in the dangerous waters of this world, but yet we would have our own feet at the ground. What a ſad truſting, what a ſad faith

is

is this, to truſt God and money both! It is but a vain fancy for one to think himſelf ſwimming, when he will ſtill keep one foot at the ground. My deareſt, I blame myſelf more in this than you, for I cannot forget how I have heard you ſpeak in commendation of a life of faith, and truſting to providence. Alas, alas! perhaps, I have loved too much to pray, "Give me this day my daily "bread;" but believed my prayer would be the better granted, that I had a half-year's proviſion by me, when the ſtyle of that pattern of prayer allows but *day by day*. I have been too unwilling of ſuch immediate dependence, and loved to have my proviſion not day by day, but month by month, or year by year. What if the Lord will have me to go without theſe leading-ſtrings, and not to lean ſo much upon the crutches of the world? I have of late been thinking, that perhaps one of the reaſons why covetous men take ſuch pleaſure in hoarding up money, is becauſe they would fain not truſt, and be out of the reach as it were of providence. What is this but to imitate theſe that built the tower of Babel, to be out of the reach of another deluge? But how eaſy is it for God to get at them? I remember ye told me of one, a friend now in glory, that was uſed with a life of dependence, that when another perſon complained of the hardneſs of the times, ſaid, I am afraid we be forced to break upon our ſtock: ſhe anſwered, I am not afraid we break upon ours; meaning the Lord's providence was her's and her huſband's, and that it was ſufficient enough, there was no fear of it, it was all ſhe looked to: whereas the other looked only to money ſhe had out in bank.

LXI.

I miſtake you mightily, my dear, if it will not yield you comfort, to remember how he led you, and fed you all the days of old, when the people of the Lord were in a ſad and ſuffering perſecuted condition; when your worthy father durſt not be ſeen, and when he lay under his ſix years cruel impriſonment, without ever once being brought before the council; wanted ye any thing then? My deareſt, ye know what his providence is, ye have waded this ford before, when I was not worthy to be a ſufferer;

ſufferer; it will be a great ſhame to you, to be forced to go through the ſame ford that ye found no danger in: but as for me, I have never been at this ſchool yet, ſo no wonder I cannot ſay my leſſon ſo well at the firſt. Believe me, it is no wonder though one that has never been upon this ice, be feared at firſt ſetting his foot on it: ye have been through upon the ice, ye know it will bear you, ye did not find a well-eye or unfrozen ſpring in it all; and therefore, my love, ye cannot ſhun the imputation of a coward, if ye be afraid to venture on it: no wonder if I be affrighted at its cracking and bowing, a life of faith is not the natural way, it is oppoſite to it: we are ready to think we have a cold coal to blow at, when we have no more but providence.

LXII.

A Heathen poet ſaid, *Qui mortem*, &c. "He that "feareth death, loſeth the very time he lives." It is juſt ſo with affliction: he that troubles himſelf too much, loſeth the very mercies he enjoys; yea, as the proverb I have heard, Many a one is afraid for the day he never ſaw; ſo many a one are vexed with fear of that which never came upon them. Some perhaps have been anticipating their miſery, tormenting themſelves before the time; others tormenting themſelves with that which the divine providence had, by its decree, ordered never to come upon them. Some again may have had more horrible apprehenſions of the thing than they found it to be. Poverty is thought one of the worſt of miſeries; yet ſome find a thing, which, in the proverb, is called *glad poverty*. Trouble not yourſelf before the time: our Lord ſaith, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

LXIII.

My deareſt, ye know, when our children are ſick, we do not keep them at ſo great a diſtance as when they are in health. There are two things that I think not unobſervable in relation to this thought; the firſt is, the parents give more of their company and kindneſs to the child; and the child even loves to have more of it, and uſes more than ordinary boldneſs and earneſtneſs in requeſting of it. O are not both of theſe applicable to the afflicted ſaint's caſe? does not oft-times even the

Lord,

Lord, when his people are under the ſickneſs of affliction, come more kindly to them than at other times? does he not allow them more of his preſence? and on the other hand, does not even his children cry more after him? A child that dare hardly come into the room where ye are without leave, in health, how will he cry out if ye offer to ſtir from his bed-ſide, when in ſickneſs? as if there were ſome mitigation of their trouble, by the parent's preſence, and as if their ſickneſs gave them a ſort of title to it. Is it not juſt ſo with the child of God? How are the Pſalms repleniſhed with inſtances of this ſort? "Lord, leave me not, for I am ſore diſ-"treſſed. Be not far off, when trouble is at hand," &c. I believe it is a miſtake that beggars are generally in, who think their very poverty in this world entitles them to heaven when they die; but I believe it is no miſtake in the children of God, to think that their afflictions in this world may entitle them to a greater boldneſs in their prayers to God for ſpiritual graces. Lord, ſince thou are pleaſed to afflict me, &c. let thy Spirit guide me through theſe troubles. Ye know there are examples in the Pſalms.

LXIV.

If we would look more to the firſt than to ſecond cauſes, it might perhaps give ſome eaſe to our minds. How did this eaſe or compoſe David's mind, when Shimei curſed him? "Let him alone, the Lord hath "ſent him." What a fooliſh thing were it, if one ſhould get a letter from a foreign kingdom, affronting or vexing him, to fall upon the poſt-man, who brought it from the poſt-office, and abuſe him for it? Some people blame this and that and the other thing, when any thing falls out againſt them; and ſome, I have heard, blame things ſo far even from the ſecond cauſe itſelf, that I have been ſtruck with ſurpriſe. Some again will be revenged on the ſecond cauſe: a dog runs after and bites the ſtone that is thrown at him, without regarding the hand that threw it. Theſe things cannot move of themſelves without him, no more than the barrel of a watch can pull the chain, and move the wheels, when the ſpring is taken out of it. Take the poize or weight off the

firſt

firſt cauſe, and the clock of ſecond cauſes ſhall never move more againſt you. It were as reaſonable to blame a clock for going, when the poize is on, as creatures for doing the Creator's pleaſure. I need not caution here about ſin. Every body will acknowledge, that when I fall down on my knees, and pray to God, that that is an act of worſhip: but I believe I am in no great error, when under every new accident, as ſome wrongfully call them, I look over the heads of all ſecond cauſes to God himſelf, and take it as from him. I call that alſo a ſort of worſhip.

LXV.

Let not your heart grieve, my love, becauſe I have been ſo long in London, and have not got ſettled into buſineſs. Many ſtay here waiting on buſineſs, till they be worſe reduced than (bleſſed be the Lord!) I have ever yet been. Some indeed, by the divine providence, fall immediately into ſome good buſineſs; but they are very few. And then when it is ſo, there is more talking of that one that gets buſineſs, than perhaps of many that lie out; and this may be one of the reaſons why ſo many come to this place. And beſide, ye muſt conſider, that providence appears in a very eminent manner, particularly———anent me. And though ye ſhould hear of ſuch an one who has thriven well, conſider that it happens to them as a wiſe projector, who has many projects in his head: he tries them all privately, the third part of them does not hold good; and at length one or two of them does. Theſe that hold not good, he buries, and the world never hears tell of them; but ſuch as prove good and take, make a great noiſe in the world. Juſt ſo it is with people that come to this place, ye may look upon one that thrives, as a lighted torch in a dark night; and them that do not thrive, as unlighted ones: one lighted, is more ſeen and noticed than an hundred unlighted ones.

LXVI.

The end of Jonathan's rod was dipt in a honey-comb; and when he had taſted of it, his eyes that were like to fail, were enlightened. Who can tell but it may be ſo with us? There is a ſweetneſs in the bleſſed rod that

the world knows not of. There is a ſweetneſs even in the pouring out of the bitter complaint before the Lord, which I need not ſay much of to one that is ſo well acquainted with it. Only I would at preſent ſay two things of it; firſt, It is the beſt way to get eaſe; and ſecondly, Sometimes it is the way to get an outgate or deliverance. As for the firſt, I compare it to a woman that has a tumour or bealing in her breaſt, which the doctor thinks fit not to lance, till it is near the time: ſhe has no eaſe till it is broken, and the matter get vent, and then comes eaſe. Ye know what the meaning of this is. But in the ſecond place, it is a way to get an outgate, and to be delivered from the furnace. Throw a cake of lead into a fire, it muſt melt firſt before it drops through the grate: when one is melted before the Lord in prayer, then he ſuffers him to drop through the furnace; yea ſometimes, like Jacob, he wreſtles and prevails with God for the deliverance. I remember Ovid tells a ſtory, how the giants fought with the gods: I know no better way to wreſtle with God, than in earneſt and humble prayer. O that we could wreſtle and prevail! O that our joint prayers, like chained ſhot, could beat down every thing that ſtands in the way of our mercy! O that theſe arrows ſhot to heaven from our bended knees, and more bended ſouls, might hit the aim'd-at mark! It is a lawful war: our Saviour tells us, "The kingdom of heaven "ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Never lay down your weapons, my love, take no quarter, fight while there is a drop of blood in your veins, fight upon your knees, and though he ſhould kill you, be ſtill giving the other thruſt of prayer: and though all hopes of life ſhould fail, fight in your looks to him, fight in your ſighs, fight in your groans, fight in your tears; and though ye could neither groan, ſigh, nor tear, fight in your thoughts and inward deſires; be courageous, he will not kill you.

LXVII.

Will the ſympathy, tears, and prayers of a kind huſband do you any good, my deareſt? Do ye doubt of either of them? I need not take up much paper in proving of either. A man needs not uſe many arguments in

in a clear ſun-ſhining day, to prove that the ſun is ſhining. So I go to another thought.

LXVIII.

Conſider, or rather remember, how the Holy Ghoſt bears up the ſoul of the Chriſtian. Some are ſtrangely borne up, ſo as may be matter of wonder. What ſtrange inſtances in the books of martyrs? How did Stephen, in the hands of the rabble, look up ſtedfaſtly unto heaven, and ſee the glory of God, and Jeſus ſtanding on the right hand of God? Acts vii. 55. How did Habakkuk, in the midſt of temporal wants, cry out, "Although "the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in "the vines; the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the "fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut off "from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God "of my ſalvation. The Lord God is my ſtrength," &c. What but the Holy Ghoſt ſupported him under theſe wants?

LXIX.

Another great ground of comfort is, that the Lord can eaſily afford help if he pleaſes. There are enough of arrows of ſalvation in his quiver, if he pleaſes to ſhoot, even when all likelihood is paſt. All means of preſervation of the life of Hagar's child ſeemed to fail, when the water was ſpent in the bottle; and when ſhe, being unable to endure the ſight of the death of the child, laid him down at a buſh, and went a good way off: yet the Lord, in that extremity, opened her eyes, and let her ſee a well of water. Believe me, my deareſt, it gives great eaſe to me to think, what immediate influence the Lord has upon the hearts of men; and how ſoon, by putting a ſingle thought into a man's heart, he could do all my buſineſs if he pleaſed.

LXX.

Or if you pleaſe to take the apoſtle Paul's advice: he allows us to take comfort from the reſurrection of the dead; and that he founds upon the reſurrection of our bleſſed Lord, as it is in that comfortable text, 1 Theſſ. iv. 13, 14.: and upon the ſame account, verſe 18. we are counſelled, if not commanded, to "comfort one

" another with theſe words." My love, what a dream ſhall all theſe things we now think ſo much of, appear to us in that pleaſant morning of the reſurrection? Though I go many a night very weary (to call it no worſe) to bed, with that diſtemper which has haunted me theſe many years *; yet how briſk and lively am I next morning very early! O what a weak reſemblance is this, of that lively and comfortable reſurrection to them which ſleep in Chriſt Jeſus!

LXXI.

When we are baptized, and firſt enliſted under the colours of Chriſt Jeſus, and obliged to fight againſt the devil, the world, and the fleſh, do you think it was only againſt too great allurements and abundance of the world that you were bound to fight? no, I believe you and I are obliged to fight alſo againſt the wants, as well as the overflowings, and temptations that way. Our honour, and that which is a thouſand times of more concern, the honour of God our Maſter, and Chriſt Jeſus the Captain of our ſalvation, is at the ſtake: O ſhall we ſhamefully throw down our arms, and run away from our colours!

LXXII.

O think upon the day of your eſpouſals to Chriſt, the bleſſed Bridegroom of your ſoul! It was none of the articles of your contract of marriage, that ye ſhould be free of worldly trouble. I believe ye were ſo glad to have the Bridegroom ſecured to you, that theſe things were either undervalued, or quite forgotten. O my dear, looks he to any leſs advantage than he did! is his beauty faded ſince? are the charming rays of his conquering beauty leſs inflaming to your ſoul? is there any more intrinſic value in this world than was then? Since ye have got him who is better than all things, care the leſs for traſh.

LXXIII.

Take it not ill, my deareſt, ſince it is in love, that I mind you of Laſſwade, and the Weſt-kirk near Edinburgh, and other communions. Took ye no reſolutions on you there, to follow Chriſt through well and wo? did ye there

* An aſthma.

reſolve

reſolve to leave him the firſt bad way you came to? came ye not there to get ſtrength for ſuch a day as this? Thoſe were your pay-days, theſe ſeem to be your fighting days: have we taken our wages, and will we not fight?

LXXIV.

If none of theſe things prevail with you, as I am not unhopeful ſome of them will, take Chriſt's advice, "Let "not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe "alſo in me." O keep the eye of faith very ſteady upon him, as a well-furniſhed Saviour for all our wants! Let us act faith upon him as our Head, and ſo ſenſible of every pain that is in the body; as our Huſband, and ſo concerned in all the wants of the family; as our Captain, and ſo concerned in all the fatigue and travel, and much more the wounds and ſores, we get in the ſervice; as our Prophet, and ſo concerned to teach us in every dark time; as our Prieſt, and ſo it may be comfort to us that the ſacrifice is already offered up for our ſin; as our King, and ſo concerned to defend us his ſubjects, and conquer all our enemies; as our ſtrength, and ſo through him we can do all things. I leave it to yourſelf to enlarge upon his fulneſs, in your own meditation.

LXXV.

Laſtly, my writing, and your reading of this letter, are additional ties and obligations upon us both, to ſubmit ourſelves tamely to the yoke of the Lord. We cannot ſay we are ignorant of our duty; the Lord help us to performance.

Now, I have ſpread the plaſter for your and my own ſore; but, alas! my deareſt, I cannot make it to ſtick. O that the Phyſician of ſouls would warm it with his own breath, and put it to with his own powerful hands, and then it will be ſure both to ſtick and cure!

I thank the Lord that has put me upon this piece of preparatory work for theſe gloomy diſpenſations which are in my view; and finding ſome eaſe, by theſe thoughts, of my trouble (which I am afraid you are not altogether free of), I know you will take it kindly that I have told you what did me good.

If it pleaſe the Lord, who commands the mighty waters, to ſend me ſafe home to you this winter, I would caution

caution you, that ye miſtake not my fainting and bodily indiſpoſition, which I have been much troubled with here, for a dejection or ſinful deſpondency of mind.

That I been ſomewhat free, think not much, conſidering ye are the other half of myſelf I write to: and though it were not ſo, I reckon myſelf concerned to declare the goodneſs of God to my ſoul; and if there redounds the leaſt grain of glory to him, what care I for myſelf, or how little eſteem any body have of me? A ſight of God makes one deſpiſe themſelves, as Job did.

Now the God of all conſolation and patience bear up your ſoul, and comfort our ſpirits, in this dark day of adverſity. O that we were ſtrengthened with the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withſtand in the evil day, "looking unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of "our faith; who, for the joy that was ſet before him, "endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down "at the right hand of the throne of God!" O that he who dwelt in the buſh, and did not ſuffer it to conſume, when it was in a flame of fire, may not ſuffer us to conſume under the flames of the moſt ſcorching afflictions! The Lord be nearer to you than trouble: he that ſupported ſinking Peter, ſupport your ſoul, and win the bleſſing of theſe that are ready to periſh.

My deareſt in this lower world, remember me to all that pray for me, or in the leaſt wiſh me well.

Now, my love, paſs by my weakneſſes in this letter, and take it as a proof (I know not but it may be the laſt), that I am

Your loving Huſband,

JAMES YOUNG.

P. S. *I know I will not need to bid you pray for me, when you once hear I am at ſea.*